

Testimony of Michelle Seagull Commissioner of Consumer Protection

Public Health Committee Public Hearing, March 14, 2022

H.B. 5430 “AN ACT CONCERNING OPIOIDS”

Senator Abrams, Senator Anwar, Senator Somers, Senator Hwang, Representative Steinberg, Representative Petit and Honorable Members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony about H.B. 5430, An Act Concerning Opioids.

The Drug Control Division within the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP) oversees Connecticut licensing for pharmacies, pharmacists, and controlled substance providers. The Drug Control Division is also responsible for the Prescription Monitoring Program. DCP works closely with our sister agencies, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and the Department of Public Health (DPH), issues involving the opioid epidemic. We thank the Committee for raising this bill and fully support Sections 2 and 8, language which we worked on drafting with DMHAS and DPH. Section 2 amends the definition of “Drug Paraphernalia” to allow individuals who use opioids to use fentanyl test strips as method of overdose prevention. Section 8 will provide practitioners who prescribe controlled substances with the ability to treat patients through the dispensation of controlled substances such as methadone, through a mobile unit. These two sections will create additional harm reduction tools to help to combat this ongoing crisis.

DCP, however, has concerns with several sections of this bill. Sections 3 and 4 of this proposed legislation remove the requirement that pharmacists receive training before prescribing and dispensing (through a standing order) opioid antagonists. This training, which is a one-time requirement of a pharmacist's continuing education, ensures that patients and loved ones receive instructions about how to administer this lifesaving medication, upon dispensation.

The language in section 6 amends the provision of take-home methadone prescribing to increase access to methadone. The dispensation of methadone is already regulated by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration.

Finally, section 9 creates data sharing and reporting requirements for DCP, DMHAS and DPH that are duplicative and unnecessary. DCP, DMHAS, DPH and other appropriate state agencies already share data and regularly discuss data sharing needs through the Alcohol and Drug Policy Council. DCP need additional resources to implement this proposed language.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input about this important proposal. We are happy to further discuss the issues we've raised with the proponents and this Committee. Please contact our Legislative Director, Leslie O'Brien, if you have any questions.